

Amendments To The Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (cancelled).
2. (previously presented) An animation system comprising:
an audio analysis unit having an audio output and a state change output; and
a control unit having an input and an output, the input being constructed to receive a state change indication from the audio analysis unit, the control unit being further constructed to generate compositing command information for individual component elements of an animation frame and send the compositing command information out the output,
a compositing unit constructed to create a composite image sequence, from individual graphic elements, based upon the compositing command information received from the control unit, the composite image sequence being synchronized to an audio stream received from the audio output of the audio analysis unit, and
wherein the control unit comprises a transition controller and a transition table.
3. (original). The animation system of claim 2, further comprising a cueing unit coupled to the control unit.
4. (cancelled)

5. (original) The animation system of claim 2 further comprising a graphics database coupled to the compositing unit, the graphics database having graphic information stored for access by the compositing unit.

6. (original) The animation system of claim 5 wherein the graphics database comprises digital images.

7. (original) The animation system of claim 5 wherein the graphics database comprises image definition information.

8. (original) The animation system of claim 2 further comprising a timeline recorder coupled to the control unit.

9. (original) The animation system of claim 2 wherein the control unit further comprises a state change controller.

10. (original) The animation system of claim 9 wherein the state change controller is a trigger controller.

11. (original) The animation system of claim 9 wherein the state change controller is a continuous controller.

12. (original) The animation system of claim 9 wherein the state change controller is a programmed event controller.

13. (original) The animation system of claim 2 wherein the audio analysis unit comprises a signal analysis module.

14. (original) The animation system of claim 13 wherein the signal analysis module is constructed to perform a fast fourier transform on an input audio stream.

15. (original) The animation system of claim 14 further comprising classification bandwidth settings defining between at least two frequency bands and about five frequency bands.

16. (original) The animation system of claim 15 wherein the classification bandwidth settings are tunable.

17. (original) The animation system of claim 14 wherein the signal analysis module is constructed to output spectral content within the at least two frequency bands and about five frequency bands, power and zero crossing information for the input audio stream.

18. (original) The animation system of claim 2 wherein the audio analysis unit comprises a mouth classification unit constructed to receive spectral analysis information and output mouth state information for provision to the control unit.

19. (original) The animation system of claim 2 wherein the audio analysis unit further comprises a classification table.

20. (original) The animation system of claim 19 wherein the classification table associates spectral information with mouth state information.

21. (original) The animation system of claim 2 wherein the audio analysis unit further comprises a signal analysis module and a mouth classification unit.

22. (original) The animation system of claim 21 wherein the signal analysis module is one of at least two signal analysis modules.

23. (original) The animation system of claim 22 wherein the at least two signal analysis modules share the mouth classification unit.

24. (original) The animation system of claim 21 wherein the signal analysis module is one of at least two signal analysis modules and the mouth classification unit is one of at least two mouth classification units.

25. (original) The animation system of claim 24 wherein each signal analysis module is coupled to a mouth classification unit in a one-to-one relationship.

26. (original) The animation system of claim 21 further comprising a multiplexor coupled to the signal analysis module and a demultiplexor coupled to the mouth classification unit so that at least two audio tracks can share the signal analysis module.

27. (original) The animation system of claim 21 wherein the signal analysis module performs time-slice pre-filtering.

28. (original) The animation system of claim 2 wherein the audio analysis unit and compositing unit run on a single computer.

29. (original) The animation system of claim 2 wherein the audio analysis unit runs on of a first computer and the compositing unit runs on a second computer.

30. (original) The animation system of claim 2 wherein each of the audio analysis unit, control unit and compositing unit run on separate computers.

31. (original) The animation system of claim 2 wherein the control unit is constructed to accept MIDI signals.

32. (original) The animation system of claim 2 wherein the audio analysis unit further comprises an audio delay device constructed to output the audio stream.

33. (original) The animation system of claim 2 further comprising:
a processor;
storage, communicatively coupled to the processor; and
a program comprising instructions stored in the storage which, when executing,
implements functions of the audio analysis unit.

34. (original) The animation system of claim 2 further comprising:
a processor;
storage, communicatively coupled to the processor; and
a program comprising instructions stored in the storage which, when executing,
implements functions of a transition controller.

35. (original) The animation system of claim 2 further comprising:
a processor;
storage, communicatively coupled to the processor; and
a program comprising instructions stored in the storage which, when executing,
implements functions of a compositing engine.

36. (original) The animation system of claim 2 further comprising a transition table.

37. (original) The animation system of claim 36 wherein the transition table includes
entries to effect an in-pose transition.

38. (original) The animation system of claim 36 wherein the transition table includes entries to effect a pose to pose transition.

39. (original) The animation system of claim 36 wherein the transition table further comprises at least one of a command, a program segment, data, control information, a direct reference to an image, an indirect reference to an image, vector description information, a location, a transformation, a tag, a magnification factor, a zoom factor, a function or a parameter.

40. (previously presented) An animation development system comprising:
a library of graphic elements defining steps in a sequence to effect a change from one state to another state and capable of being composited together into animation frames, wherein the library comprises data representing mouth positions during speech;
a controller constructed to respond to state change information and generate graphic element change commands in response;
a delay having an input constructed to accept an audio stream; and
a compositing engine coupled to the library and the controller so that when the graphic element change commands generated by the controller are received, the controller will access the library and generate composite animation frames incorporating selected graphical elements identified by the steps in the sequence based upon the graphic element change commands.

41. (original) The animation development system of claim 40 wherein the library further comprises character component elements.

42. (original) The animation development system of claim 40 wherein the controller is further constructed to respond to audio analysis state change information.

43. (original) The animation development system of claim 42 wherein the state change information is usable to effect a change in a graphic element other than a mouth.

44. (original) The animation development system of claim 42 wherein the state change information is usable to effect a change in a mouth graphic element.

Claims 45-46 (cancelled).

47. (original) The animation development system of claim 46 wherein the controller is constructed to respond to audio analysis state change information generated from the audio stream and the delay is constructed to delay the audio stream by an amount sufficient to allow for synchronization of the audio stream with incorporated graphical elements.

48. (original) A method of creating an image stream comprising:
stepping through individual components of a first transition sequence for a first image component element based upon first state change information;
correlating the individual components of the first transition sequence to first stored graphical information representing the first image component element as the first transition sequence is stepped through;

stepping through individual components of a second transition sequence for a second image component element based upon second state change information;

correlating the individual components of the second transition sequence to second stored graphical information representing the second image component element as the second transition sequence is stepped through; and

compositing the first stored graphical information and the second stored graphical information into frames such that, as the first and second transition sequences are stepped through, a sequence of composite frames comprising the image stream is created including the first stored graphical information and the second stored graphical information.

49. (original) The method of claim 48 further comprising performing a format conversion on the image stream.

50. (original) The method of claim 48 further comprising displaying the image stream in real time.

51. (original) The method of claim 48 further comprising recording the image stream.

52. (original) The method of claim 51 further comprising laying the image stream to tape.

53. (original) The method of claim 48 further comprising analyzing an input audio stream.

54. (original) The method of claim 53 further comprising synchronizing the input audio stream to the image stream.

55. (original) The method of claim 53, wherein the first stored graphical information comprises mouth shapes, the method further comprising synchronizing the mouth shapes to the input audio stream based upon the analyzing.

56. (original) The method of claim 53 wherein the analyzing comprises performing a Fast Fourier Transform on the audio stream.

57. (original) The method of claim 53 further comprising correlating mouth images to the audio stream based upon a result of the analysis.

58. (original) The method of claim 53 further comprising pre-filtering the audio stream.

59 thru 74. (cancelled)

75. (original) A method of constraining external control of a performance of an animation comprising:

defining a universe of explicit state-to-state transitions for the performance, each of the explicit state-to-state transitions being represented by a defined sequence of identifiers;

receiving information indicating that a performer has triggered a transition from a current state to a new state;

determining if the new state is a defined goal state that is reachable by a state-to-state transition within the universe of explicit state-to-state transitions and, if so, compositing an image sequence into the animation based upon a sequence of identifiers defined for the state-to-state transition, otherwise, compositing a default image sequence into the animation.

76. (original) The method of claim 75 further comprising:

compositing a pre-composited image sequence into the animation.

77. (original) The method of claim 76 wherein the pre-composited image sequence is a procedural.

78 thru 90. (cancelled)

91. (original) A system for producing a animation video comprising:

means for receiving a cue input and outputting a state change indication representing a transition end state;

means, coupled to the means for receiving, for determining whether a current state corresponds to the transition end state and for issuing a command when the current state does not correspond to the transition end state;

means, coupled to the means for determining, for recording a timeline of transitions;

compositing means for receiving the command and outputting a composite frame containing a graphical image element associated with the command; and
frame buffer means for receiving the composite frame and outputting it to one of a screen or a recording device.

92 and 93. (cancelled)

94. (original) A method of creating a performable character from existing image assets, the existing image assets comprising an original sequence of composite frames that change from an original state to a new state as the original sequence is stepped through, the method comprising:

deconstructing pieces of at least some of the composite frames to obtain a series of component image elements extracted from the composite frames and representing a change of a component between one state and another state;

creating a database of the series of component image elements, the database being constructed such that any individual component image element can be accessed independent of any other individual component image element from the series; and

integrating the database into a system such that, when state change information calls for a transition in the component from a first state to a second state, at least some of the individual component image elements in the database for the component will be accessed based upon a transition sequence defined in the system for the transition.

95. (original) The method of claim 94 further comprising:
indexing the database.

96. (original) The method of claim 94 wherein the deconstructing comprises:
masking unwanted elements from a sequence of the existing image assets.

97. (original) A method of creating an animation from a common image inventory, the
method comprising:

receiving a first input audio stream during a time period;

receiving first state change indications identifying independent transitions of individual
component elements between initial states and new states during the time period;

compositing first component image elements and first mouth component image elements
into a first sequence of first individual frames, the first individual frames collectively
representing the animation, the first component image elements being identified from the
common image inventory based upon the first state change indications and the first mouth
component image elements being identified from the common image inventory based upon an
analysis of the first input audio stream; and
outputting the animation.

98. (original) The method of claim 97 wherein the animation is one of at least two
animations, the method further comprising:

receiving a second input audio stream during the time period; and

compositing the first component image elements and second mouth component image elements into a second sequence of second individual frames, the second individual frames collectively representing a second of the at least two animations, the first component image elements being identified from the common image inventory based upon the first state change indications and the second mouth component image elements being identified from the common image inventory based upon an analysis of the second input audio stream.

99. (original) The method of claim 98 wherein the first input audio stream is in a first language and the second input audio stream is in a second language.

100. (original) The method of claim 98 wherein the compositing the first component image elements and first mouth component image elements into the first sequence of first individual frames and the compositing the first component image elements and the second mouth component image elements into the second sequence of second individual frames occurs during the time period.

101. (original) The method of claim 97 further comprising:
recording the first state change indications.

102. (original) The method of claim 101 further comprising:
receiving a second input audio stream during a second time period;

playing back the recorded first state change indications in synchrony with the second input audio stream; and

compositing the first component image elements and second mouth component image elements into a second sequence of second individual frames, the second individual frames collectively representing a second of the at least two animations, the first component image elements being identified from the common image inventory based upon the recorded first state change indications and the second mouth component image elements being identified from the common image inventory based upon an analysis of the second input audio stream.

103. (original) The method of claim 97 wherein the animation is one of at least two animations, the method further comprising:

receiving second state change indications identifying independent transitions of second individual component elements between second initial states and second new states during the time period; and

compositing second component image elements and first mouth component image elements into a second sequence of second individual frames, the second individual frames collectively representing a second of the at least two animations, the second component image elements being identified from the common image inventory based upon the second state change indications and the first mouth component image elements being identified from the common image inventory based upon an analysis of the first input audio stream.

104. (original) The method of claim 97 further comprising:
following the outputting, editing the animation.

105. (previously presented) A method of simultaneously creating two animations, each having a character sharing common character image elements reflecting actions of the character and differing mouth image elements, the differing mouth image elements comprising first mouth image elements corresponding to a first language in the first animation and second mouth image elements corresponding to a second language in a second animation, the method comprising:

receiving a first audio stream in the first language and a second audio stream in a second language;

analyzing the first audio stream to obtain a first mouth state stream;

analyzing the second audio stream to obtain a second mouth state stream;

identifying a series of first mouth image elements using the first mouth state stream;

identifying a series of second mouth image elements using the second mouth state stream;

compositing a series of character image elements and the series of first mouth image elements together to create a first animation; and

compositing the second series of character image elements and the series of second mouth image elements together to create a second animation.

106. (original) A method of performing a live animation comprising:

receiving a series of signals representing animation element changes based upon movements of a motion capture unit;

correlating individual stored image components to the signals based upon a defined sequence of transition identifiers; and

compositing the individual stored image components into frames of an animation, based upon the defined sequence, such that the movements of the motion capture unit are reflected in the animation as a sequence of the individual stored image components.

107 thru 129. (cancelled)

130. (original) An animateering apparatus comprising:

an input converter having an output generator constructed to generate output patterns, each pattern being a function of a particular input supplied to the input converter;

a compositing engine;

a set of selectable images of a component, each image being combinable into a composite animation frame by the compositing engine; and

an ordered list of entries, each of the entries identifying a step in a sequence that effects a change to the component as function of a generated output of the input converter when the entries are stepped through, an individual entry in the step identifying an image of the component in a specified state to be provided to the compositing engine from the set of images, so that when an input is applied to the input converter, a corresponding series of composite animation frames is created.

131. (original) The apparatus of claim 130 wherein each of the entries includes an index into the set of selectable images.

132. (original) The apparatus of claim 130 wherein each of the entries includes an image parameter.

133. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 132 wherein the image parameter comprises at least one location, rotation, translation, scale, or spatial orientation parameter.

134. (original) The apparatus of claim 133, wherein the parameter consists of a two-dimensional parameter.

135. (original) The apparatus of claim 133, wherein the parameter consists of a three-dimensional parameter.

136. (original) The apparatus of claim 132 wherein the image parameter comprises at least one color, shading, shadow, or transparency parameter.

137. (original) The apparatus of claim 130 further including an input device connected to the input converter, wherein the input device is at least one of a MIDI board, a signal processor, a waldo, a tracking device, a spot detector, a motion sensor, or a computer keyboard.

138. (original) The apparatus of claim 130 wherein the action is one of multiple actions.

139. (original) The apparatus of claim 138 wherein each of the multiple of actions is contained in a single table for a character.

140. (original) The apparatus of claim 138 further comprising an additional set of selectable images of an additional component, wherein the component and the additional component are different from each other.

141. (original) An animateering method comprising:
specifying a component from among multiple components subject to a parametric change; and
defining an action for the component as an ordered list of data items which can be dynamically sequentially stepped through in an order based upon a change in an input value such that, a first change from a first input value to a second input value will cause a first sequential stepping from a first data item to a second data item and cause a corresponding first parametric change in the component, and a second change from the second input value to the first input value will cause a second sequential stepping from the second data item to the first data item and a corresponding second parametric change in the component.

142. (original) The method of claim 141 wherein the first sequential stepping comprises m sequential steps and the second sequential stepping comprises n sequential steps.

143. (original) The method of claim 142 wherein m is greater than n .

144. (original) The method of claim 142 wherein m is less than n .

145. (original) The method of claim 142 wherein m is equal to n .

146 thru 151. (cancelled)

152. (original) The method of claim 112 further comprising:

identifying a first set of entries from the frames database which, when sequenced through, will effect a first change in a component of an animation from an initial state to a goal state; and

identifying a second set of entries from the frames database which, when sequenced through, will effect a second change in the component from the initial state to a second goal state.

153. (original) The method of claim 152 further comprising:

constructing a table for use in conjunction with at least one of the first set of entries or the second set of entries, the table comprising at least one of a command, a program segment, data, control information, a direct reference to an image, an indirect reference to an image, vector description information, a location, a transformation, a tag, a magnification factor, a zoom factor, a function or a parameter.

154. (original) The table of claim 153 wherein the first set of entries are stored on a computer readable medium.

155. (original) The table of claim 153 further comprising:

identifying a third set of entries which, when sequenced through, will effect a default transition.

156. (original) The method of claim 107 further comprising:

creating the first graphic database by compiling a group of low resolution images.

157. (original) The method of claim 156 further comprising:

creating a second graphic database by compiling a group of high resolution images, at least some of the high resolution images having low resolution counterparts in the first graphic database.

158. (original) The method of claim 109 further comprising:

creating the second graphic database by compiling a group of high resolution images.